

2001 SESSION REPORT

A REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE 44TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



Dear friends,

As the leaves start to turn and autumn is approaching, I'd like to take a bit of your time to share some of the things I have been working on in the state Legislature.

As many of you may know, this legislative session was plagued with all sorts of difficulty — from the earthquake to the energy crisis to the worst drought in nearly 25 years. With these natural calamities and other political

difficulties, our part-time Legislature went into three "over-times" and finally adjourned on July 25.

Despite the natural obstacles and manmade frustrations, with the support of other legislators I was pleased to be able to make real progress on a number of public health and safety issues in our state.

- Our communities will be safer due to changes in sex offender sentencing;
- County chemical dependency specialists will have more authority to get needed treatment for those with serious alcohol or drug problems while saving taxpayer money;
- Corrections officers will be able to apprehend visitors who try to smuggle drugs or other contraband into our prisons; and
- The two-year transportation budget will provide \$3.4 billion in transportation funding across the state for 2001-03, including funding to improve safety and relieve congestion on State Routes 522, 525, and 527.

All in all, I was the prime sponsor of 12 new laws, most of which received unanimous support from both the House of Representatives and the Senate, which is quite an accomplishment.

Of course, there is always more work to do. With the 2002 session only four months away, I look forward to hearing your thoughts and concerns about our state. If you have any questions or concerns or if you would like additional information on any bill, please contact me using the information at the right.

It is an honor to serve as your state Senator in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Jeanine Long
State Senator

Increased protection against sex offenders

While many of you may have followed the debate in the news over placement of a halfway house for sex offenders on McNeil Island south of Tacoma, the bigger story in this legislation was a change in the sentencing for sex offenders.

In 1984, the state adopted a "determinate" or fixed sentencing process for offenders, which meant once they served their sentences they had to be released. A small number of individuals who had committed sex offenses and met very specific criteria were civilly committed after serving their determinate sentence. The rest had to be released because they had served their time—regardless of the risk they posed. I felt this should be changed.

Five long years of work paid off this session, as a new law I sponsored will put greater emphasis on a sex offender's risk to the public when determining release. Under this new law, sex offenders will receive both a minimum and a maximum sentence. Prior to the end of their minimum sentence, an evaluation of risk will be made. If sex offenders are considered "more likely than not" to re-offend, release will be denied with review again occurring every two years until they reach their maximum sentence which for many will be life. If released, conditions will be placed on the offender, which if violated, could result in re-incarceration. This law takes effect September 1 and will result in greater community safety.



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**Keep in
Touch**

Saving taxpayer money, promoting public safety, streamlining government

This session, the Legislature approved 12 bills I sponsored:

- Senate Bill 5047** allows corrections officers to detain people who are smuggling drugs and other contraband into our prisons. Previously they could only ask a person to leave the grounds. Effective July 22. Passed with one “no” vote.
- Senate Bill 5048** requires the court to give great weight to evidence of a person’s prior mental health history, resulting in repeated hospitalizations or repeated police interventions, when determining whether that person should have inpatient or a less restrictive alternative commitment. Effective July 22. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 5051** changes the law on involuntary commitment to include not just those who are a danger to themselves or others but also those who are gravely disabled due to substance abuse. Effective July 22. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 5143** reduces contribution rates for members of the Washington State Patrol Retirement System, establishes a new cost of living adjustment, and creates a second tier of benefits for new hires. Effective July 1. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 5145** exempts trainers and trainees in housing authority resident training programs from membership in the public employees’ retirement system. Effective July 22. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 5392** mandates the types of judicial officers who can hold hearings on child emancipation filings in cases where the child, 16 or older, is petitioning for a declaration of emancipation from his or her parents or guardian. Effective July 22. Passed with only two “no” votes.
- Senate Bill 5393** improves reporting and record-keeping requirements related to juvenile truancy. Effective July 22. Passed with only one “no” vote.
- Senate Bill 5583** improves efficiency and effectiveness of the state’s mental health system by requiring greater accountability. Effective May 15. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 5995** provides for better information sharing among the courts, providers, divisions, and agencies serving dependent children and their families. Effective July 22. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 6055** puts into law the Foster Care Assessment Program to provide a standardized and validated approach to screening children. Effective July 22. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 6056** requires the state Department of Social and Health Services to coordinate services for children and families in child dependency cases. Effective July 22. Passed unanimously.
- Senate Bill 6151** puts a 24-bed halfway house for sex offenders on McNeil Island, revises sentencing for sex offenders to require longer prison terms and more life sentences for rapists and molesters, and makes it a crime for teachers or school employees to have sex with students under the age of 18. Passed with bipartisan support.

Cleaning up state prisons

What would you say if you heard prison and jail correctional officers had no power to detain a person suspected of carrying on illegal activity, such as smuggling drugs or other items, at our prisons or jails? You would probably be as surprised as I was.

That’s why I sponsored Senate Bill 5047 so officers may now detain, search, and remove people who enter or remain on the grounds without permission if these people appear to be committing a crime or possessing contraband. As soon as a suspect is detained, correctional officers



must notify local police authorities so appropriate action may be taken. The bill passed with only one “no” vote.



Improved safety, mobility on local highways



Last December, I attended the ribbon cutting ceremony as we opened the newly expanded three-mile stretch of State Route 522 between Monroe and Woodinville. The project, which includes two new westbound lanes, completed the first phase of long-awaited improvements to one of the state's most deadly highways.

Although the Legislature didn't agree on a long-term transportation solution this session, we did pass a shorter-term 2001-03 transportation budget of \$3.4 billion, which ensures funding for several improvements to major highways in our district.

During the 2001-03 construction cycle, we will spend more than \$6.7 million designing, purchasing right-of-way, and starting to expand to four lanes the stretch of State Route 522 from State Route 9 to Paradise Lake Road. We'll spend another \$7.9 million on preliminary engineering, right-of-way purchase, and expansion of the stretch from Paradise Lake Road to the Snohomish River Bridge to four lanes as well as construction of a new interchange at Fales Road.

Additional funding will be needed in future years to complete the remaining phases on State Route 522.

The state will also spend roughly \$12.7 million to expand State Route 527 into a five-lane highway between 164th St. SE and 112th St SE.

On State Route 525, \$24.7 million will be spent during the 2001-03 construction cycle to:

- Complete freeway work and HOV lanes from I-5 at Swamp Creek to 164th;



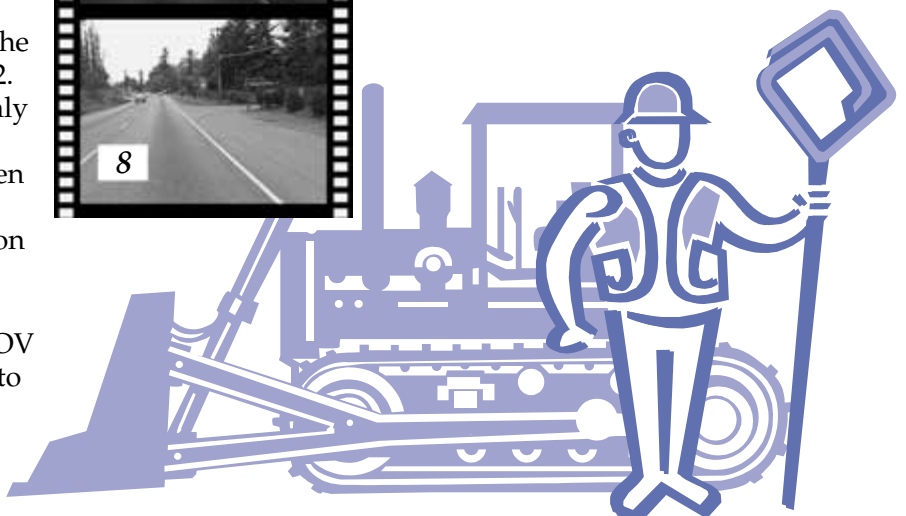
Highway construction projects:

- 1) SR 522: SR 9 to Paradise Lake Rd.
- 2) SR 522: Paradise Lake Rd. to Snohomish River Bridge
- 3,4) SR 527: 164th to 112th
- 5) SR 525: Swamp Crk to 164th
- 6) SR 525: SR 99 Interchange
- 7) SR 525: 164th to SR 99
- 8) SR 525: SR 99 to SR 526

- Continue building the new interchange at State Route 99;
- Widen the stretch from 164th to State Route 99; and
- Continue widening the highway to four lanes from State Route 99 to State Route 526.

For more information on projects planned for the 44th District, you may visit <http://www.transinfo.state.wa.us/Projects/CapProjWeb.asp> and select the "Final Legislative Projects" list.

The 44th Legislative District is one of the most rapidly growing areas in the state. The lack of a long-term revenue package to fund future transportation needs will undoubtedly affect future safety and congestion relief efforts in our district. I will continue working to protect our citizens by obtaining improvements to these deadly highways.



Saving money, saving lives

Helping drug and alcohol addicts get needed treatment

In an in-depth feature in July, the *Tacoma News Tribune* chronicled the sad story of Cecil Running Horse, a local homeless man with an addiction to alcohol. Over the last 11 years, this man has cost taxpayers \$2.1 million in hospital visits, ambulance rides, jail stays, detoxification treatment and related services.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated problem. Patrick Vanzo, Chief of Crisis and Engagement Services for King County's Department of Community and Human Services, documented

the costs of 36 "high utilizers" of drug and alcohol services and found that each cost more than \$40,000 per year. This is not a one-time cost. It's year after year because they refuse treatment. Jails, detoxification centers, hospitals, paramedics, courts, county service workers—all taxpayer funded—respond time after time to the same individuals.

I have worked for the past two years to change the law on involuntary commitment to include not just those who are a

danger to themselves or others, but also those who are gravely disabled due to substance abuse, like Cecil Running Horse. This bill passed unanimously and the new law took effect on July 22.

We all know that treatment doesn't always work. However, we also know very few, without treatment, make needed life changes on their own and many who receive treatment do turn their lives around and become productive, contributing members of society.

Improving services for mental illness

The US Surgeon General's first report on mental illness in 1999 found nearly one in five Americans suffer from mental disorders, ranging from clinical depression to schizophrenia, but two-thirds of them never seek treatment.

As the leading Republican on the Human Services and Corrections Committee, I am acutely aware of this problem and the impact it has upon our communities.

Roughly one-fifth of the population in our jails and prisons suffers from mental illness. Recent analysis of the youth in our juvenile rehabilitation programs found **40 percent of them are seriously**

mentally ill. If we could identify and treat these people sooner, we could prevent future problems, have fewer crime victims, and relieve pressure on our overloaded criminal justice system.

In 1999, the Legislature directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee to conduct a broad performance audit of the state's public mental health system. This session, we approved a bill I sponsored which:

- Focuses the community mental health system on outcomes;
- Provides funding to ensure additional accountability from

the state's mental health system; and

- Directs the state to develop a plan to reduce administrative costs by Dec. 15, 2001, so more money is spent on services rather than bureaucracy.

Unfortunately the Governor vetoed the final provision, saying it did not give the department enough time, so he extended the timeline. However, since the proposed timeline is not in statute, we will continue to monitor the state's mental health systems to ensure taxpayer money is used efficiently and effectively in serving the mentally ill in our state.